

A Wolf After My Own Heart

by SWWoman

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Summary: Shortly after John and Joss mate, a new threat arises that could destroy their new found happiness.

1. Chapter 1

****And the Wolves are back!****

****Before anyone gets confused I should explain that this story takes place shortly after Joss was turned and mates with John, round the same time as Wolves Mate For Life**. ** Joss is still growing into her Wolf powers and they have not had Cali yet. (Sorry GB!)****

****I want to thank fangirlu for not only betaing this story but also giving me the idea for it in the first place. I should probably give her co-author credit for all the great ideas and feedback.****

****I still do not own Person of Interest, I just mess with the characters for fun, not profit.****

* * *

><p>Summer 2009

John Reese swiped his key card in the door of the hotel room. With the caution born of several years as a CIA assassin, he carefully swung the door open and stepped into the suite, his gun drawn. He edged into the room silently, his eyes constantly moving.

"Is that a Glock in your pocket or are you just happy to see me?"

John whirled, pointing his gun at the figure standing the bedroom doorway. Pamela Barrett didn't twitch**;** she was a CIA assassin as well and was quite used to looking down the barrel of a gun. John relaxed when he saw her and put his gun back in the waistband of his

pants.

"I didn't expect you beat me here," he said.

Pam sauntered toward him, wearing nothing but a smile and pair of strappy high heels that accentuated her long legs. Like John, she was tall and lean with sliver blue eyes that marked her as one of the Wolf people descended from the Old Bloodlines. Her hair was long and blonde and she moved with the natural grace of a born Wolf. John watched her advance towards him, his own silver blue eyes glittering with lust. By Wolf standards her body was perfection, and John's cock grew harder with each step she took towards him.

She reached him and stood just far enough away that her breasts didn't quite brush his chest. Slowly she reached up and pushed his jacket off his shoulders. "I got an early flight," she purred softly. "Jack and I finished up with the Romanian Minister of Commerce early." She slowly began undoing the buttons on his shirt.

John bit back a moan of pleasure as her fingers brushed his skin. "I saw that on the news. Looked like a clean kill. Nice work."

"Thanks. Bastard won't be passing any more US secrets along now." Pam finished with the last button and removed his shirt dropping it on the floor with his jacket. "How's Crazy Kara?"

"Still crazy," John murmured.

Pam snickered at that, and then leaned into him inhaling his masculine scent. John's cock jumped, but his iron discipline made him keep his hands to his sides. "She wasn't too happy when she learned I wasn't spending my leave with her," he said. "She asked if I was spending it with you."

"She's a sore loser." Pam laughed a deep throaty laugh. "I stole her boy toy." Her hands slid under his undershirt and slowly she pulled it up and over his head, revealing his toned chest and stomach. "Oh look I messed up your hair," she smiled playfully, then reached up her hand to run her fingers through his black-going-salt-and-pepper-at-the-temples hair in a futile attempt to smooth his cowlick.

John closed his eyes at her touch but showed no other sign of his burning lust for her. They had played this game many times and he didn't like losing.

Pam giggled as she slowly ran her fingers over his abs then dropped to her knees to remove his shoes and socks. Still kneeling**,** she undid his belt, popped the button on his pants and then lazily unzipped the zipper. One swift tug and John was exposed in all his glory.

She sat back on her haunches to stare at him. John was also a near perfect specimen of the Wolf people. He was tall, without an ounce of fat on him. He had the body of a swimmer, all lean muscles instead of bulk. She stared at his cock with a smirk on her face, He was long and thick and rock hard. In her last play of the game, she gently licked the underside of his cock in one lick from balls to tip. John didn't flinch.

Pam stood up. "You win, John," she whispered. Suddenly, she was slammed against the wall with John buried in her pussy. She laughed and wrapped her legs around his waist as she slammed into her. She didn't mind losing like this.

Their lovemaking was short and very physical. A picture fell off the wall, the glass shattering as John drove into her over and over again. Pam came first, screaming out her pleasure, dragging John over the edge shortly after her. They leaned against the wall panting for several minutes until Pam carefully unlocked her legs from his waist and shakily stood on her own two feet.

"Amazing as usual John," she smirked at her lover.

John looked smug. "There's plenty more where that came from. We have all week."

Pam stretched like a cat, a very satisfied, sated cat. "We are good together, aren't we? Would you like a drink?" She indicated an ice bucket with a bottle of champagne sitting sideboard. John nodded; so she moved to pour the beverage.

"Do you ever think about shucking the CIA and going back to civilian life?" she asked as she handed him his flute. "You're a born Alpha; we're both from the Old Bloodlines. We could put together an amazing pack."

John shook his head. "No," he said curtly. He didn't like to think about how he should be an Alpha now and how his pack betrayed him.** He certainly didn't want to tell Pam about it; she was a great fuck, but he never had considered her mating material. Pam may not have Kara's unmitigated bloodlust, but she was self-centered and egotistical. She was in the CIA, not to protect her country, but to prove to everyone that she was the best. He knew she was not Alpha material, her ego was too big.

Effective Alphas had to be unselfish people that put the pack needs above their own. Packs were tight knit social units that acted as extended families, with the Alphas acting in the parental/leadership role. Back in the Old Days, when Wolves were hunted simply for being Wolves, this role had been crucial to the survival of the pack and the Wolf species in general. Even today in modern times when Wolves were not actively hunted, packs run by poor Alphas didn't remain intact long.

Pam pouted at John's swift negative answer. She of course did not consider herself unsuited to be an Alpha. As a child of the Old Bloodlines, she had been raised to think she was a superior Wolf to those who were not from those old families. She was Wolf nobility and she knew she was special.

"On come on John," she purred in a lighthearted voice. "Wouldn't you like a pack of your own? And cubs? Lots of little Johns running around?"

Pam watched him carefully, but John's face remained unreadable. "That's not for people like us, Pam."

The truth was he would have loved to have a pack, a mate and his own cubs, he had been born and raised to be an Alpha and his whole life

had been preparation for him to take over his parent's pack. But his parents had been murdered, and his pack had turned its back on him, so he had thrown himself into the Army Rangers instead. When the CIA had come calling he had thrown himself into his covert operations work, knowing that he was throwing away any chance he had a pack and a family. But after his pack's betrayal, he had long since decided that he was never going to have either anyway. He certainly wasn't going to have it with Pam.

Seeing that the conversation was closed on that particular topic, Pam straddled his lap, rubbing her still wet folds against his dick. "How about another roll in the hay, then? Is that for people like us?"

John hissed as his cock sprung to life again. Pam may be a narcissistic bigot, but she was damned good at sex. He reached down and adjusted himself so he slid easily into her once again. "Yes, that's for people like us," he growled.

* * *

><p>John and Pam continued their affair, meeting up whenever their schedules permitted. The sex was unbelievably hot, and the company was slightly better than Kara's. At least Pam didn't babble on constantly about being "The Dark." It was still not ideal, but John had long ago resigned himself to a less than ideal life.

Pam was genuinely sorry when she heard through the grapevine that John had been "retired." She didn't for one second buy the idea that he was a traitor-she knew he was far too honorable-but he was gone by the time the news reached her and there was nothing she could do. In the years that followed, her thoughts would often turn to John and she would be filled with regret that she had never had the chance to mate with the handsome Alpha and form a pack of their own.

* * *

><p>Present Day

Bullets were flying everywhere and Pam was pinned down. She checked her remaining ammo and swore to herself. _So this is how it ends,_ she thought to herself. _Never thought it would happen to _me_. _She laughed bitterly.

Over the sound of the gun fire she heard an unfamiliar voice yelling something she couldn't quite make out and then more gun shots. She risked a peek over the low wall where she was crouched and got the shock of her life when she recognized John Reese. He was laying down cover fire, working in tandem with a short, brunette woman she didn't know. John turned to her.

"Black Lincoln at the curb. GO!" he shouted.

Pam didn't need to be told twice. She leaped over the wall and bolted down the alley as fast as she had ever run. Spying a black Lincoln idling at the curb, she dove into the backseat. The big car leaped forward, leaving a lot of rubber behind as it shot down the street.

Pam sat up in the seat and saw that her driver was a Black woman of average height who seemed to know what she was doing as she expertly gunned the car around the corner. The back end of the car slipped a bit**, **but the woman maintained control easily.

Pam looked back. "We're being followed!" She said.

"We got this," the woman replied calmly. Then she hit the brakes.

Pam looked at her, there was no one else in the car. "We?" She asked.

Pam got her answer when an enormous dump truck smashed into the side of the pursing vehicle, rolling it several times. A pudgy middle**-**aged man in a rumpled suit with red-brown hair leaped from the cab of the truck and scrambled into the passenger seat of the car. "Go!" he yelled and the Lincoln leaped forward again. The man laughed. "Dump truck gets them every time," he said smugly. "That never gets old."

"It does when you're in the car the truck hits. It only takes once," the woman said wryly. "Are we being followed?" the woman calmly asked over her shoulder to Pam.

Pam looked again. "No," she said, the relief in her voice was palpable.

The woman touched an earwig in her right ear that Pam had not noticed before. "Finch how are John and Sam doing?" she asked. The answer obviously satisfied her because she smiled and said, "OK, we'll meet them there."

Pam remained quiet in the back seat as she sized up her rescuers. Both of them were Wolves; she could feel them using her Wolf sense. Somehow she didn't think they were CIA, but they seemed to be professionals. Mercenaries maybe? Hired by John to save her? She smiled at that.

The woman expertly guided the car through city traffic, moving quickly**, ** but doing nothing that would draw attention. Finally they pulled into an underground garage underneath a high rise apartment building and parked the car in a reserved spot in the back corner right by the elevator. The woman and the man both got out of the car with guns drawn**, **looking around. After a thorough search of the area the man opened the back door of the car. "Coast is clear," he said. "Move fast."

Pam got out of the car with her own gun drawn and made a beeline for the elevator, her eyes constantly moving. The woman and the man got in with her, and the woman punched a code into the keypad. The elevator started to move**, ** and Pam watched as the numbers of the floors went by. The elevator stopped at what she judged to be the top floor.

The doors opened into a richly appointed foyer. She could see a beautifully decorated living room beyond. The woman and the man both stepped out of the elevator. "Stay here until we clear the place," the woman ordered. Pam bristled a bit at the order, but did as she was told. She'd had enough gunfighting for one day.

She leaned against the wall in the foyer as she heard her saviors methodically work their way through the penthouse, clearing each room as they went.

After several minutes the man returned to Pam. "Come on," he said gruffly. She followed him into the living room and collapsed on the large sectional.

"I guess some introductions are in order," the woman said. "I'm Joss Carter**,** and this is Lionel Fusco."

Pam gave them a small smile**.** "Pam Barrett, but I'm guessing you already know that." She eyed the odd couple**.** "You're not CIA are you?"

"NYPD actually," Fusco said pulling out a badge to show her. Carter also showed hers.

Pam raised an eyebrow**.** "Since when did the NYPD get in gun battles with the CIA?"

Carter shrugged. "This operation is off the books, so to speak, but we do take exception to them killing people on our turf."

There was something off about mere policemen knowing the secrets of the CIA, and it did not sit well with Pam. She narrowed her eyes at Carter. "So, if you are only police detectives, just how did you know I was going to get 'retired'?" she asked with a trace of hostility.

"We have a reliable source," Carter replied with equanimity despite Pam's contentious tone.

Before Pam could say anything further, the elevator dinged again, and John, followed by the short brunette woman, entered the room. Pam was up off the couch and threw her arms around him.

"I should have known they couldn't kill you," she purred and then planted a big wet one on his lips. Pam heard Carter growl behind her and John swiftly disengaged.

"I see you've met my mate," John said while firmly holding Pam at arm's length.

"Your mate?" Pam turned and gave Joss a calculating look. Joss, fully aware she was now being sized up as a rival, merely smiled back.

Pam gave Joss an evil smile. "Did John tell you how close he and I were? We had a week in Vienna where we hardly left the hotel room," she smirked.

Joss arched an eyebrow at the now ex-operative. "No, as a matter fact he never mentioned your name at all," Joss said sweetly.

Pam narrowed her eyes. "Tell me Joss, were you Wolf born?"

"No, John turned me himself," Joss said with a hint of pride.

"Oh, I see," Pam scoffed in a dismissive tone. She turned to John

with a sneer, "You mated with a mongrel?"

Joss, used to many years on the streets of New York, was unaffected by Pam's use of the slur for Wolves who had been turned rather than born. The rest of the team stared at Pam in shock, stunned by her casual use of the epithet.

"Give me a minute alone with Pam**.**" John's quiet request cut through the thick tension in the room like one of Shaw's best knives through flesh.

"Of course," Joss said and led Shaw and Fusco from the room.

John glared at Pam. "Joss is my mate**, **and I will not tolerate any disrespect towards her," John stated flatly with a cold hard look that promised very bad things for anyone who disobeyed.

"She's a mutt! She's beneath you!" Pam hissed.

"No." John's voice sliced through the air like a knife. "I'm beneath her, but she took me anyway."

Pam's snort of contempt was her only answer.

Before the argument could go any further, the elevator chimed another cheerful ding and Finch stepped out. "Ah, you must be Pam Barrett," he smiled at the She Wolf.

Pam took one look at the expensive suit the funny little man in front of her was wearing and turned on the charm, all trace of her argument with John gone.

"Hello," she chirped. "Do I have you to thank for my rescue?"

"Indirectly only. Mr. Reese, Ms. Shaw and the Detectives Carter and Fusco are the ones who deserve your gratitude," Finch responded as he threw a puzzled glance at John's stony face. Finch had been working with Reese long enough to know when he was furious.

"If you will follow me, I have a few things for you. A new identity and some money to help you get started." Finch lead the way into the living room where Carter, Fusco and Shaw were waiting.

Before Finch could get settled John held out his hand to Joss. "Let's go. Shaw, Fusco, you stay with Finch until he's done here." Joss took his hand and they left, leaving a puzzled Finch and an irate Pam to stare after them.

"So I take it you and Pam have a history?" Joss asked in an amused tone of voice as they rode the elevator down.

John growled deep in his throat. "I'm not proud of it. I had limited options."

"You don't owe me an explanation, John," Joss said as she wrapped her arms around his arm and leaned her head against his shoulder.

John raised his other arm and gently stroked her cheek. "I mated with the right woman."

Joss stood on her toes and kissed him. "As long as you don't forget it, we'll be just fine."

* * *

><p>The next morning the team gathered at their usual diner for breakfast. There were five people and six breakfasts. Shaw couldn't decide between the Denver omelet and the tall stack of pancakes, so in typical Shaw fashion, she ordered both.

"You eat like my son," Joss teased her as she sipped her coffee

Shaw snorted, "Taylor's a good kid**;** I'm OK with that. Are you going to finish your toast?"

Joss pushed the last slice of her toast over to Shaw without another word and turned her attention to Finch.

"The reason I asked you all here is to discuss the possibility of adding Ms. Barrett to the team," Finch began but John interrupted.

"No," he snapped in a definitive tone that definitely did not invite any argument.

Finch looked startled. "You don't think we could use her skill set?"

John shook his head. "I don't trust her. Pam will turn on us if she thinks it suits her purposes. I don't want her knowing about the Machine. The less she knows about us, the better."

Fusco paused with a bite of his biscuits and gravy halfway to his mouth. "I don't like her since she was nasty to Joss, but we saved her life. You really think she'd turn us in?"

"Yes," John said flatly. "Pam's only true loyalty is to Pam."

"Very well, John," Finch said. "If you don't think she's trustworthy, that's good enough for me."

Joss had to admit she was relieved; while she was not a jealous person, she did not like the way Pam looked at her mate. She trusted John, but Pam did not strike her as the type of Wolf who would honor the mating bond. If she ever saw Pam Barrett again, it would be too soon

* * *

><p>**The story of John's pack's betrayal is told in my previous story Welcome Home Wolf. To make a long story short, John's parent were murdered and he was accused of the crime<p>

2. Chapter 2

Here is chapter 2. Since this fic all written and betaed, I'll be sticking to my usual posting schedule of Monday, Wednesday and Friday. There are 9 chapters total.

I want to thank everyone who reviewed chapter 1. Unfortunately FF is glitching again, and I am unable to respond to several of you. Some of you may have noticed your reviews have not posted to the site, I am getting the email alerts so I am able to see your reviews that way. As soon as FF allows me to, I'll be able to PM and thank you properly.

* * *

><p>Chapter 2: "She's dead"

"_If she ever saw Pam Barrett again, it would be too soonâ€¦| "_

Unfortunately**,** Joss was destined to see Pam again very soon. When she and John arrived at the next Pack Night, they found Pam already at the park cheerfully introducing herself to the pack members and deftly inserting herself into the pack.

Keeping a smile plastered on her face as they approached**, **Joss hissed at her mate, "I didn't know Pam was going to be here!"

"I didn't either," John snarled. He didn't bother with a smile or pretending to be happy to see her, much to Pam's amusement.

"John! Joss! How nice to see you!" Pam greeted them with fake enthusiasm and a very real smirk.

John simply stared at her, his face a neutral mask. This seemed to amuse Pam.

"I've been without a pack too long," she explained**,** her smirk not fading in the least. "You have such lovely people here, I want to join you."

"Stay here," John said to Joss. Joss nodded and let go of his arm as he moved forward so he was very close to Pam. "What are you up to?" he whispered so softly only Pam and Joss could hear him.

Pam was all wide**--**eyed innocence**. ** "What do you mean? If I'm going to be a civilian now, I just want to join a pack like any good Wolf."

John stepped back and looked at her with a hard expression on his face. "Alright," was all he said before he walked away and returned to Joss.

Joss saw confusion briefly flick across Pam's face before she resumed her friendly smile for the benefit of the pack members. She had obviously expected more resistance from John and was confounded by how quickly he caved in. Joss, however, knew exactly what her mate was doing.

"Keep your enemies close?" she queried in a low voice as she took his arm again.

John growled. "She's up to something. Keep an eye on her and ask Shaw and Fusco to as well."

However, Pam behaved just like a Wolf joining a new pack all night long. She behaved so well that as the evening drew to a close Shaw asked John, "Do you think she might just want to join the Pack?"

John shook his head**. ** "No, this is just the calm before the storm. Keep watching her."

* * *

><p>John had no idea how right he was. Pam had set a goal-to be his mate and an Alpha**-**and Jocelyn Carter was in her way.

John had never understood that to Pam their little assignations were more than just sex, John was Pam's designated Prince Charming.

Pam had been raised in the Navy town of San Diego. Her father was a Navy SEAL and in Pam's mind, the perfect Wolf. He was tall with the build of a champion swimmer and the distinctive silver blue eyes of a Wolf from the Old Bloodlines. Pam thought he was the most handsome man she had ever seen, and she looked up to him like the Daddy's Girl that she was. She was his little princess and he told her that at every opportunity. Pam's mother would often have to stifle a laugh as she would walk by Pam's room and see the tough Navy SEAL folded into a tiny chair, wearing a sparkling tiara and having a tea party with Pam and her Barbies.

As Pam grew, her father taught her other, less lady-like skills. He would take her and her two brothers out in the woods to hunt and fish. They learned to gut fish and skin a deer with speed and efficiency. Pam learned to stalk and kill her prey in both human and Wolf form. She was very good at it and basked her daddy's praise. She lived for her daddy's praise.

Pam's father was also an excellent mate to Pam's mother. They were said to have had an extremely strong bond and they often showed their deep affection for other, even in front of the kids. Hugs, pecks on the cheek and nose rubbing were frequent sights in Pam's household. Aside from her father's frequent deployments to on secret mission to secret places, it was a wonderful way to grow up.

That all came to an end when Pam's father was killed on a mission in some faraway land when she was just thirteen. The details were classified, but they didn't matter anyway, he was gone and that was all that really mattered. They buried him with full military honors in Arlington, hung his posthumous Silver Star on the wall in their tidy living room and tried to go on with their lives with varying degrees of success.

Pam's mother retreated into bitterness and racism. Rumor had it that her mate had died because another Wolf on the team, a recently turned new recruit on only his second mission, had made a crucial mistake. The rumor was never confirmed, and actually seemed to proven false when that new recruit went on to a distinguished career in the SEALs, but Pam's mother needed someone to blame for the loss of her beloved mate. She poisoned Pam's mind with bitterness towards "mongrels." "You can't trust them Pam," her mother would say. "They're not 'real' Wolves." She became a rigid follower of the Old Ways, and so did Pam.

Pam's brothers went on to notable careers in law enforcement and the Army, but Pam decided she was going to follow in her father's footsteps and become a Navy SEAL. Unfortunately for her, women were not allowed to become SEALs, but her bold application to SEAL training came to the notice of the CIA. Pam decided that if she could not be a SEAL, the CIA was a good substitute.

Throughout her career in the Navy and the CIA, Pam had looked for that perfect Wolf, the one who reminded her of her heroic father. She was disappointed time and time again, no Wolf could live up to the idea she had built in her mind of her beloved daddy.

Until one day John Reese strode into the room for a mission briefing and Pam knew her search was over.

John was the perfect Wolf. He was tall with the build of a champion swimmer and the distinctive silver blue eyes of a Wolf from the Old Bloodlines. It was her father all over again, and Pam was determined to make him hers. This was her chance to reclaim that ideal life that fate had snatched from her all those years ago. She began a relentless campaign to make John her mate.

It seemed easy enough at first. John's partner Kara was crazier than a wolverine on meth, so it was very easy to woo him from her side every chance she got. The sex with John was off-the-chain good, but John would never take it any further than casual sex. Despite her best efforts, he never opened up to her, nor did he ever show her any affection outside the bedroom. Pam has repeatedly tried to get him to leave the CIA with her, but he would never even discuss the possibility. All of Kara's prattling about being "The Dark" had messed with his head and he thought a happy life with a family and a pack was not for him.

In desperation, Pam allowed herself to become pregnant the last time she and John were together. She knew that the honorable John Reese would feel obligated to mate with her when he found out about the baby. She just knew they could make a happy life together if John would just let it happen. She just had to force his hand.

But again fate denied her. Her jealous partner found the positive pregnancy test in the garbage and secretly slipped her a cocktail of drugs designed to force her to miscarry in a drink. Pam killed him on their next mission in revenge and left his body behind, but the damage was done. John and Kara were sent to Ordos before Pam could contact him, and Pam thought John was dead until he had rescued her from her "retirement."

Fate had handed her a second chance with John Reese and she was going to seize it in both hands. All she had to do was get rid of Joss Carter. Pam began stalking the female Alpha, waiting for an opportunity to remove the person she viewed having her rightful place in the pack and in John's affections**. **

Pam was very patient**;** she knew if anything happened to Joss too close to her joining the pack it would arouse suspicion. John was smart and that Finch character was smarter**. **They'd put two and two together if she moved too quickly. She had to strike at the right time and make it look like an accident. So she carefully stalked her prey with all the cunning she had learned from so many years as a

covert operative. She followed Joss to work, she followed her home, and she followed her all over the city as Joss investigated cases with both John and Fusco. She watched with a sneer on her face as Joss dropped Taylor off at school, and she barely surpassed her gag reflex every time John kissed her in public.

Pam observed Joss's habits; how she stopped at the same little coffee shop by the precinct on her way into the office every morning and that she took her hot dog from the cart in front of the station with mustard and sauerkraut.

While Pam was stalking Joss she was disgusted to discover that the Carter/Reese mating was very much a love match. John and Joss would often exchange loving glances. John looked at Joss like she had hung the moon, the sun and the stars. Pam would grind her teeth every time**. ** John had never looked at _her_ that way.

John even brought Joss flowers. Flowers! A bouquet of rather pedestrian flowers he bought off a down on his luck looking street vendor. Pam watched through the window as John shyly presented Joss with the bouquet**. **Joss squealed with delight and they shared a deep loving kiss that lingered for far too long in Pam's opinion.

Of all the things Pam had to watch while she was hunting Carter, the hardest thing for her to see was John and Joss talking. Pam had never been able to get John to say more than few words to her at any given time. In the way of most Special Ops soldiers, the reserved ex-Ranger never seemed to have much to say. However, when John was with his mate, he opened up to her easily and the emotional intimacy between the two Alphas was like a knife in Pam's gut.

This revelation had hit Pam one night as she watched John and Joss on some sort of stakeout. She wasn't entirely sure what exactly her prospective mate did for a living, but it seemed to involve protecting a lot of losers; Pam had been too busy following Joss to spend much time thinking about John's current job. That night John and Joss were together on stakeout and she had her first chance to observe the Alpha pair together for an extended period of time.

Pam watched from her hiding place as Joss, carrying two coffees, slid in the passenger seat of the car where John was waiting. She handed one to John who gave her a fond smile in return. As Pam continued to observe them, the man she had known as taciturn and reserved conversed easily with his mate the entire time. John laughed at Joss's jokes, he talked seriously with her, and he listened carefully to anything Joss said. During the three or so hours Pam watched them, John probably said more to Joss than he had said to her during their entire week in Vienna. Pam burned with jealousy that he had opened up to the mutt and not to her.

To make matters worse, she could tell by the positions of their arms that they were holding hands. John had never held her hand in public or private, not even during the magical week in Vienna. Pam's insides twisted with this discovery. Jocelyn had what Pam had longed for and been denied for so many years.

Jocelyn had to die. Jocelyn had Pam's life, the one she had wanted with John. The life Pam tried to convince John to leave the CIA and build with her. She was not going to let Joss have HER life dammit. Pam was from the Old Bloodlines, she was royalty. Joss was just a

mongrel. Pam has spent her entire life as a Wolf while Joss had only been a Wolf for less than a year.

Pam's loathing of Joss grew and grew until it threatened to consume her, but her time in the CIA served her well**. She channeled her hate into action and doubled her efforts to rid herself of the object of her animosity. Joss hardly made a move that Pam didn't see.

* * *

><p>Unbeknownst to her, Pam herself was being observed. The Machine watched her carefully, puzzled by her motives. With no emails or phone calls to help it unravel Pam's intent, it wasn't quite sure how to handle this situation. Pam had followed other people since she had been in New York, but she had only blackmailed them for large sums. While Pam's actions were despicable, they were not a threat to life, so her activities were outside the normal area of the Machine's interest. However, the Machine's programming told it that Joss was different from Pam's other targets, so it watched and waited.<p>

* * *

><p>During her extensive surveillance over several weeks, Pam realized what Joss's biggest weakness was; Joss consistently put herself in the line of fire in dangerous situations. She never backed down from dangerous suspects and was almost always one of the first cops into the building during busts. Joss was brave to the point of recklessness.<p>

Pam knew this was the opening she needed to rid herself of the she-wolf who held the position in the Pack and John's heart she felt rightfully belonged to her. All Pam had to do was be patient and wait for the right opportunity.

* * *

><p>Multiple times during the time Pam was stalking her, Joss would feel a malevolent presence that fluttered at edge of her Wolf sense like a ghost. Joss would often try to focus on it to try and identify it, but her inexperience with her Wolf sense prevented her from doing so. She was beginning to wonder if she was imagining it, so she never mentioned it to John or any of her friends.<p>

* * *

><p>The opportunity Pam had been waiting for came one hot and humid night in mid-summer. Joss and Fusco had been invited by the Narcotics squad to participate in a raid on a drug warehouse one of their most elusive suspects was rumored to frequent. Happy to be so close to bagging their man in series of vicious murders, they eagerly agreed to join the bust that was scheduled to go down at 11 pm that night.<p>

The plan had been to swoop down on the warehouse and try to take the suspects inside by surprise. Unfortunately**, they had stationed a lookout on the corner who tipped the suspects off when he saw the line of police cars flying down the street at high speed. The drug cartel only had a few minutes warning, but it was enough. A furious gunfight followed; the kind of firefight that reminded Joss of her tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. The cartel was well-armed and bullets

flew indiscriminately through the air. The police called for more back up and several ambulances were also ordered to the scene in anticipation of casualties.

Pam watched the entire thing unseen from her hiding place. Only the Machine was aware of Pam's presence, and deducing Pam's intentions, it immediately sent Finch Joss's number, but it was too late. Pam was already creeping towards Joss with murder in her heart.

Joss had taken refuge behind a large, heavy duty packing crate that was partially in a shallow puddle on the floor. Forced to crouch in the puddle to take advantage of the cover the crate offered, she ignored her wet shoes as she returned fire. After her tours in the Middle East Joss was used to discomfort far worse than this.

Slowly, carefully, relying on all her covert skills to remain unseen, Pam slunk through the warehouse towards Joss. Ruthlessly, Pam tamped down the adrenaline surge that coursed through her veins at the thought that tonight would be the night she would rid herself of the mongrel who stood between her and her destiny.

In all the confusion and sensory overload, Joss's hyper**-*sensitive Wolf sense did not pick up on Pam's approach until the other woman was right behind her. By then it was too late. During her stealthy approach, Pam had spotted a heavy duty cable with an exposed end sparking only a few feet from where Joss was crouched. Joss turned and saw Pam just as she dropped the cable into the puddle where Joss was squatting. Then Pam melted back into the shadows as quietly as she had come, smiling with glee as she saw Joss jerk and convulse as the electricity coursed through her body.

* * *

><p>Across the city, John and Shaw were conducting surveillance on their latest number from a rooftop. John leaned on the railing in front of him as he watched their number look around before he entered the store that served as a front for his bookie operation.<p>

Shaw growled next to him, "Why are bookies always little weasely guys? Ever see a tall, built bookie?"

"Can't say as I have," John grunted. His thoughts were far away with Joss, knowing that she and Fusco were taking part in the raid. He checked his watch; 11 on the dot. He smiled as he felt the surge of Joss's excitement through their mating bond as she and the rest of the task force stormed the building.

"You think this guy ran afoul of Elias or one of the other dons?" Shaw asked idly.

John shrugged, his attention still mostly on his bond with Joss. "Hard to say, but we're in Grifoni's territory here, not Elias's. But you can never tell with bookies since they take bets from anybody."

"Yeah, you're right," Shaw grumbled. She pulled out a bag of chips and offered it to him. John waved it away, and Shaw shrugged and began munching on them noisily. John rolled his eyes and turned his attention back to their number.

Suddenly, John was hit with what felt like a building falling on top of him. He fell to his knees with an inhuman wail of pure pain.

Horrificed, Shaw crouched down next to him. "John? John, what's wrong?"

John buried his face in his hands, rocking back and forth for several minutes before he could answer. He finally looked at Shaw and she was struck by the sheer devastation on her partner's face. "She's dead, she's dead! _I felt Joss die__!_"

Shaw rocked back on her heels, stunned by the news. For once she was too shocked to move or say anything for several seconds. She could only stare at John with her mouth open before she finally hit her earpiece. "Shit, Finch did you hear that?"

Finch had indeed heard that, but it also took him some amount of time before he was able to get over the shock enough to reply. "Um, yes, Miss Shaw, I did hear that. I'll get back to you as soon as I can."

Frantic, Finch tried to get a hold of Fusco or Carter while he was thinking**,** _Please let it not be true! Oh God__**,**__ no! Please! It will kill John!_

3. Chapter 3

FF finally got it's act together and finally posted all your lovely reviews. Wow, I had no idea the cliffhanger from Wednesday would affect everyone so much! Thanks for all your reviews!

A note to guest reviewer opheliablack, the next Wolf fic will be back in the future and have turned Taylor and more baby Cali in it, I promise!

* * *

><p>Chapter 3: At the Clinic

During the gun battle with the cartel, Fusco was only a few feet behind and to one side of Joss, crouching behind another packing crate. To his horror**,** he saw her body convulse as the electricity slammed into her.

He lunged towards her as the firefight raged around them. He only needed a second to size up the situation and kicked the cable out of the puddle. Joss's body continued to jerk for a few seconds afterwards and then collapsed forward and lay still. Frantically he felt for a pulse, but found none. Taking a deep breath he began CPR.

"Come on, Joss," he sobbed as he pressed down on her chest. "I'm not telling John I lost you."

It was only a few minutes, but to Fusco it felt like forever. He ignored the bullets flying around them hoping the packing crate would provide enough cover. All his focus was on saving his partner's life.

He barely noticed when Laskey crawled up until the young cop spoke.
"My god, what happened?"

Fusco jerked his head in the direction of the sparking cable but didn't look up. "Electrocuted. Call for an ambulance."

An agitated Laskey made the call to the dispatcher for an ambulance while Fusco continued to work on his partner. Finally he was rewarded when she coughed and moaned. He felt for a pulse once again and nearly cried with relief when he felt her heart beat under his fingertips.

"How do you feel partner?" He asked.

Joss groaned. "Awful," she managed to gasp out before she dissolved into a coughing fit.

Fusco turned to Laskey**. ** "We need to get her out of here."

Laskey scooped Joss into his arms. "Cover me."

Laskey bolted for the nearest exit while Fusco followed behind, laying down cover fire. Fusco was never so grateful as when they burst out the door into the humid night. They stumbled to the street and, shaking with the adrenaline rush, sank to their knees to await the ambulance.

* * *

><p>Shaw drove as fast as she dared through city traffic without endangering civilians. John sat in the passenger seat with his head in his hands sobbing quietly. His raw grief was breaking even Shaw's supposedly non-existent heart.<p>

They screeched to a halt in front of the Wolf Clinic and John bounded up the steps almost before the car stopped. He strode through the hallway while the clinic workers scrambled to get out of his way because it was obvious he would walk right over anyone who didn't. His eyes were burning with an intensity that threatened to scorch anyone who was unfortunate enough to catch his gaze.

"John, in here." John turned towards Fusco's voice to see him standing the doorway of a private room. John hurried towards him and with grin Fusco stepped aside so John could see a very much alive Joss sitting up in bed. John gasped when he saw her and the tears started flowing down his cheeks once again. In two strides he was at the bed gathering her into his arms, raining kisses down on the top of her head. Joss rubbed her hands in circles on his back trying to calm her trembling mate and kept repeating, "I'm OK, I'm OK."

"I thought you were dead," he whispered as he crushed her to his chest.

"She was for a few minutes," Dr. Cho said as he stepped into the room. "Fortunately, Fusco knows CPR."

John looked over at the Lionel. "Thank you," he said sincerely, his voice raspy from his display of grief.

Lionel grinned "I wasn't about to train a new partner," he quipped. "You should see the losers they promoted after the last round of tests!"

"From your reaction I'm guessing your mating bond was broken?" Dr. Cho asked John.

"He spent the last hour a sobbing mess," Shaw said as she stepped into the room.

John stroked Joss's hair while he addressed Dr. Cho. "I felt her die," he said, his voice choking.

The mating bond that mated Wolves shared could be both a blessing and a curse. The bond that formed between two Wolves when they accepted each other as mates as they made love allowed the pair feel each other's emotions resulting in an intimacy that non-Wolves could not hope to have. It was often compared to sharing a soul. Wolf matings were very strong and committed pairings, divorces were rare. However, when one half of the pair died, the other half could feel their beloved die and was often left bereft.

"I'm fine now," Joss reassured her mate again. She might not be bonded to John anymore, but she still had her Wolf sense, and she could feel that his distress was much worse than he was letting on. "We can re-bondâ€¦"

"Not for a couple of weeks," Dr. Cho interrupted throwing the Alpha pair a severe look. "I know you two are anxious to reestablish the bond, but Joss needs to keep quiet to let her heart recover from the shock. Nothing strenuous for the next two weeks. That includes bonding nookie."

John growled at that, but he knew the Dr. Cho, a born Wolf, would not say it if it wasn't the best thing for Joss. "Alright, two weeks," he said grudgingly as he held Joss tightly to his chest.

Fusco rolled his eyes. "This is going to be a long two weeks," he grumbled.

Shaw could only roll her eyes and nod her head in agreement. "I hope the Machine has a number someplace quieter, like Syria."

* * *

><p>Dr. Cho wanted to keep Joss overnight for observation and run her through a battery of tests in the morning before he released her. John flat out refused to leave her and since he was an Alpha in a clinic staffed by Wolves, he got what he wanted. A cot was brought into the room for him, but as soon as the night nurse declared lights out, John was crawling into bed with Joss. He spooned with her, wrapping his large frame around her much smaller body and holding her tightly against him.<p>

"Nurse isn't going to like this," Joss murmured sleepily as she snuggled back into him.

"Don't care," John said as he rested his cheek on top of her head. "I almost lost you today."

"You're stuck with me, remember?" she said softly.

"That's my line," John whispered and held her tighter.

A couple of hours later, the night nurse peeked in the door of the room to check on Joss and was quite unhappy to discover John and the patient spooned together, fast asleep. She started forward to wake John up and send him back to his cot when a large, beefy hand landed on her shoulder. She turned to see Lassen, the orderly on duty and a member of John and Joss's pack standing there. At 6'5", Lassen was one of the few wolves in the pack larger than John, and it had always amused Joss that he shared a name with a very large mountain.

"Leave them," Lassen whispered in a low voice to prevent waking the Alphas.

The nurse shot the orderly a dirty look. "They're not supposed to sleep together. The bed isn't big enough!" she hissed back.

Lassen nodded toward the bed. "They look like they are doing fine to me. Besides they need this. Leave them be."

The nurse looked at them again. She was not unsympathetic to their current situation since she, like most of the employees of the clinic, was also a Wolf and she understood what had been lost when their bond was broken. She looked at Lassen, nodded her head then slowly backed out of the room, leaving John and Joss to sleep.

* * *

><p>Pam sat in the small cafe waiting patiently for her lunch companion to arrive. Ever the consummate spy, she made sure she'd carefully cultivated several friendships since joining the Carter-Reese pack that allowed her to gather information on John and his mongrel of those was the overly chatty Paula Dunnigan from the records department of the Wolf Clinic. Paula, who seemed oblivious to HIPAA confidentiality requirements, was always willing to spill the beans on the current medical condition of any patient currently under the care of the clinic. Pam had always nodded sympathetically and promised to keep any secrets to herself - which she did, she was a spy after all - but she was not above using those secrets for her own ends when it suited her. She was currently living comfortably off the proceeds from several blackmail scams she was running off the information she had gathered from Paula. Several prominent members of the New York political scene who were regular patients at the Wolf Clinic didn't want their status as Wolves publicized since being a Wolf was electoral suicide.<p>

However, today Pam was nervous, even if she didn't show it on the outside. She had no idea how much Carter and Fusco had seen the previous night. She suspected that Carter had seen her just before she had dropped the live wire in the puddle where Carter had been crouching. Word had quickly traveled around the pack that their Alpha female had been severely injured, but there was little information beyond that. If Carter did remember seeing her there, she had better vacate New York with all possible speed. Attempted murder of one's Alpha was a very serious crime in the Wolf world**,** and she knew that if John ever found that she was involved in his mate's near death experience he would kill her without a second

thought.

Silently Pam cursed Fusco and his quick reaction. She had underestimated the portly detective and it rankled her. She would not make that mistake again. When she became Alpha she would watch him very closely, maybe even dispose of him. John liked the slob, but he would get over it if Fusco were to meet with an "accident."

With a heavy sigh, she dropped her head into her hands. Her father would be so disappointed in her right now. She had failed in her mission, the mutt was still alive and she still had no hope of mating with her perfect Wolf. She could hear her father's voice now, "Never settle for second best, princess. You're royalty, you give 110 percent at all times and you never ever settle for second place."

Pam listlessly stirred her ice tea. She thought back to a day when she was 10 years old. Her mother had enrolled her in a soccer league as an outlet for an active preteen Wolf, but Pam hated soccer. Since her mom had paid the registration fee, she made Pam go to every practice and every game. Pam rebelled by being the laziest player on the team. She was a natural athlete like all Wolves from the Old Bloodlines, but she simply didn't try. She played well enough to get by, but that was all.

Then her father returned from one of his mysterious deployments and for the first time, attended one of her games. They won, but her father was furious with her. "You didn't even try!" he snarled at her.

Pam had been unable to look at him and had focused instead on scuffing her shoe along one of the sidelines. "I hate soccer," she mumbled in self-defense.

"It doesn't matter," her father had responded sternly. "I expect you to give it your best at all times. You're from the Old Bloodlines, Pamela, you are expected to lead." He paused and then delivered the worst blow of all. "I'm disappointed in you."

Pam growled. That had been like a punch in the gut. Since her dad had died, she had consistently strived to be the She Wolf he had wanted her to be, but a bunch of mongrels stood in her way. She would kill them all if she had to.

"Hello Pam!" came the sing song voice of Paula, derailing Pam's homicidal thoughts. Pam gritted her teeth and smiled at the older Wolf as she slid into the seat cross from her. Paula's constant, unrelenting cheerfulness set her teeth on edge, but Pam swallowed her irritation with the woman since she was a good source of information.

"Paula, I'm so glad to see you!" Pam gushed with fake enthusiasm. "How is Joss? I've been so worried!"

The waitress stopped at their table, and Paula ordered an iced tea, then turned her attention to her lunch partner. "Oh Pam**, **it was a horrible night last night! Dr. Cho said Joss actually died for a few seconds! John was beside himself! He stayed with her all night long and it took Joss, Lionel, Sam and Dr. Cho to convince him to go home and get some rest this morning. I saw him and he looked like death

warmed over, poor guy."

Pam managed to look wide-eyed with horror at the situation, even though she wanted to choke when Joss's name was mentioned. "Is Joss alone at the clinic now?" Maybe she could sneak in later and do away with her rival.

Paula laughed, "Oh no! You don't know John very well; he would never leave her unguarded. Lassen is with her and you know how he is. He won't leave her side until John returns."

"John is very thorough," Pam commented, silently swearing to herself. She was pretty sure she could take the big guy if she had to, but this mission called for stealth, and beat downs on guys the size of Lassen were not stealthy. Sneaking into the clinic before Joss was released was out.

"Do you know what happened? How did Joss get hurt?" Pam asked the question that was burning on the tip of her tongue. The answer would tell her if she needed to run.

Paula shook her head. "Lionel didn't see much and Joss doesn't remember anything. Dr. Cho says that's common for trauma patients though. All we know is that it appears that Joss stepped into a puddle that had an electrical cable in it and got electrocuted."

It took all of Pam's training to keep the relief off her face. She was safe.

"So Joss is going to be alright?" she asked sweetly.

Paula nodded her head. "Oh yes, Lionel got to her before any permanent damage was done, and she will be fine in a couple of weeks."

"How wonderful!" Pam congratulated herself on her acting skills. She deserved an Oscar for being able to fake happiness at Carter's recovery so well.

"Oh, but there is one catch," Paula said in a conspiratorial voice as she leaned across the table. "You didn't hear this from me, but the fact that Joss died for a few seconds was enough to break her bond with John. They will have to bond again, but they can't for another two weeks because her heart needs to recover before they can have sex again."

Pam did a rapid calculation in her head. "They won't be bonded at the next the Pack Night? Poor things!"

Paula waved a hand. "I'm sure they will bond again as soon as they can. They love each other so much."

But Pam wasn't listening; a plan was forming in her mind.

4. Chapter 4

****This is a short chapter, but it is key to the plot as you will see. Pam reveals her plan to displace Joss and take over.****

* * *

<p>Chapter 4: Pack Night

Joss leaned against a tree in the park where the Carter-Reese pack generally met for Pack Night; it had only been a week since her accident and she was still a bit weak. However**, **she insisted on coming to Pack Night and showing the pack that she was fine. Dr. Cho had warned against morphing into her Wolf form and participating in the Pack run, but she could be present for the socializing that preceded the run. John, Lionel, Sam, Dr. Cho and Lassen all kept an eye on her, while Finch hovered close by to take her home when the run started.

She kept a smile on her face, cheerfully accepting the various pack members' best wishes for a speedy recovery. Some pack members were more sincere than others. There was still a lot of jealousy and resentment on the part of the unmated females that Joss, a recently turned Wolf, had been able to bag the handsome Alpha and assume a leadership position in the pack.

Pam was aware of this resentment, and she intended to use it for her purposes this night. Tonight she would show them what a _true_ Alpha Bitch looked like. She was dressed the part in a blue dress that accented her silver blue eyes with a short shirt and plunging neckline. Her hair was up and she wore sliver high heeled sandals on her feet. She carried herself regally and noticed that with the exception of John and Fusco, every male there had looked at her with admiration. _Oh yes_, she thought. _Tonight this poor pack would see what a real Alpha female looked like_. She almost felt bad for Carter the Mongrel. Tonight she was going to take Carter's life from her in more ways than one.

They came to the part of the evening where it was time for announcements of interest to the pack. Usually this time was used to announce new matings, babies on the way, school graduations and similar life events that called for the pack to congratulate one of their number. Tonight would be a night to remember as Pam stepped forward.

John was puzzled when he saw Pam step to the center of the semi-circle. She shot him a smirk, and his eyes narrowed as he realized she was up to something. He glared at her, but she turned her back to him and began to speak. She was committed now.

"Tonight I am issuing a challenge," Pam's voice rang out. "This pack did not get the benefit of choosing its female Alpha. They were presented with a stranger, someone who was not a member, a mongrel no less, and they were expected to accept this person without question. This pack deserves better!"

Pam snuck a look at Joss and was pleased to see she was furious. Good.

"A few nights ago, Jocelyn was injured and her mating bond with our Alpha was broken, so she is no longer his mate." A low murmur that ran through the pack; it was not common knowledge that John and Joss's mating bond had been broken. John opted not to tell anyone since he knew he was going to re-bond with Joss as soon as she was able. He had simply felt it was not worth mentioning, but looking

around at the shocked faces of his pack mates he realized that it had been a blunder. Had it not been for Pam it would have been a minor one, but it was now turning into a major issue. His blood ran cold as he realized the pack was upset at not being told, and Pam was going to use that opening to drive a wedge between them and Joss.

"You had Jocelyn shoved down your throats as Alpha without discussion. I propose we remedy that situation tonight. I put myself forward as an alternative candidate. I am of the Old Bloodlines; I am not some mongrel," she hissed the slur for turned Wolves. "I know my duties as an Alpha, as a pack mate, as a WOLF! According to the Old Ways, there should be a competition; I challenge Jocelyn for the leadership of this pack!"

"That's enough, Pam!" John roared. The entire pack jumped. They had never heard him raise his voice before. John advanced on her, fury radiating off him in waves. Even the pack member with the weakest Wolf sense could feel his outrage. "I won't mate with you. Ever."

Pam merely smirked at him. "You're an Alpha, John. You know as well as I do that you once the challenge is made, it's out of your hands."

John growled menacingly deep in his throat. "I don't follow the Old Ways."

"Oh, John," Pam purred with pure malice, "that doesn't matter as long as the Pack wants this challenge. The Pack deserves the best Alpha couple, and this is the best way to give it to them. A good old**-**fashioned fight to the death. Survival of the fittest and all that."

"Yes!" "I agree!" "Let the Challenge happen!" several people cried. Pam's smirk grew with each shout, while John glowered at her with murder in his silver blue eyes.

Joss looked around; she could see that Pam's speech had affected the Pack. She knew there had been some questions about her leadership for the very reasons Pam had mentioned, but she had thought as time went by and she proved her worth, the resentment would dissipate. However, Pam had struck a nerve, and she knew that not enough time had elapsed to erase any doubts the pack had about her. She realized there was only one way to get them to accept her unconditionally. Joss stepped forward, her head held high. "I'll accept the challenge," she said clearly.

John turned to her**-** "No, you don't have to do this," he said.

"Yes I do, John. Pam's got them all riled up. If I don't do this, we'll lose the pack, or at least a big chunk of it."

"So the mongrel wants to play?" Pam whipped a knife out from a thigh holster hidden under her dress. "Let's play."

"No!" John stepped in front of Pam. "Joss is still recovering from her injuries. The challenge will not take place tonight."

Pam growled. "Alright John, I can wait until the next pack night to

kill her. But remember the rules until then." Pam then turned and strolled away across the lawn.

"What rules?" a confused Fusco asked Shaw.

Shaw didn't take her eyes off Pam's back, glaring daggers at the other woman while she answered. "John can't show any favoritism to either one of the challengers. He's going to have to move out of Joss's apartment and limit contact with her."

"Limited contact for a month? That's not going to improve his already sunny disposition." Fusco shook his head. "Heck, Joss will be climbing the walls." He paused. "Will Pam really kill Joss? They still do that in this day and age?"

Shaw growled. "Real fights to the death are pretty rare, but knowing Pam she will do it. I don't think the rest of the Pack realizes she's serious about the fight to the death part."

John stood in the middle of the semi-circle as his icy glare swept over the pack. A less disciplined Wolf would be in a rage, but his stony stillness was more effective in conveying his anger. The pack, sensing a line had been crossed, all shrank from their Alpha's fury. Even though everyone was still in their human form, it was plain their tails were between their legs, including the ones who just a few minutes ago had been enthusiastically supporting the challenge. The enormity of what had just happened hit them in the face like a brick.

"Go home," John ordered. "There will be no run tonight."

The pack slunk off into the shadows, except for Lionel, Sam, Dr. Cho and Lassen. Finch also remained, standing next to Joss, being very quiet.

Dr. Cho stepped over to Joss to check on her while John stared at her. Joss impatiently waved the doctor away. "I'm fine, just tired."

"Joss, you're stressed**. I need to check your heart rate," the doctor began.

Cho was interrupted when John moved over to Joss and slipped an arm around her waist. "Let him look at you," he said so softly only Joss could hear. Joss looked up into his eyes and then nodded. Cho pulled his stethoscope out of his jacket pocket and began listening to her heart.

After a few minutes he stepped back with a nod of satisfaction. "It sounds good, Joss. I think you'll be fine after a good night's sleep."

"Thank you, Cho. Could you all give us a minute? Wait by the cars. Lionel, I'll need you to take Joss home and stay with her."

"No problem, Alpha," Lionel said. "Take as long as you need." The remaining Pack members moved off, leaving John, Joss and Finch alone

"Where are you going to stay, John?" Finch asked when it was just the

three of them.

John shrugged. "I don't know; the library or one of the safe houses."

"Nonsense, you will stay with me," Finch said firmly.

Before John could protest, Joss quickly said, "Thank you, Finch, John will take you up on that."

Finch gave Joss a small smile then moved off. "I'll wait in the car," he called over his shoulder.

John pulled Joss into a tight embrace, and Joss buried her face in his chest. They stood like that for several minutes, just savoring the feel of being in each other's arms.

"This is going to be a long month," Joss sighed sadly.

John didn't say anything; he just kissed the top of her head and held her tighter. He would have stood there with her all night if he could have, but they both knew that would only prolong the pain. After another long moment, John released her and they reluctantly made their way to their cars where Fusco and Finch were waiting for them. With one final longing look at each other, they climbed into their respective vehicles and drove off to separate homes.

5. Chapter 5

****Chapter 5: How I met my love****

The next day, Finch returned to his townhouse after running a few errands to find John on the treadmill, running like a man possessed. Understanding his friend's need to blow off some steam**, he wisely left the Wolf alone until dinner time, when he was able to coax John to the table with his favorite pasta.

John picked listlessly at his food, but Finch couldn't blame him. After all, Finch did understand the frustration of having to leave the love of one's life behind due to circumstances beyond one's control. Finch, very grateful that his friend would only have to suffer for a month instead of a lifetime, resolved to be patient with John.

After the dinner dishes had been cleared from the table and placed in the dishwasher, Finch retired to the living room with a glass of red wine and a good book as was his habit on his rare evenings at home. John, too, tried to read quietly, but soon he was up and prowling restlessly around the house, making soft growling noises deep in his throat. Finch did his best to ignore his new roommate, but John's growing agitation soon became too much to ignore. Finch closed his book. "John, would you like to talk? It does help."

John sighed and threw himself down in an armchair across from Finch. He ran his hand over his face and gave Finch a guilty look. "I'm sorry, Finch. I'm not very good company right now."

Finch gave John a reassuring look. "It's alright, John. I know you miss her."

John leaned forward and placed his forearms on his thighs, letting his hands dangle in between his knees. He looked over at Finch, tears pooling on his lower lids. "It's like a piece of me, the best piece, is missing. We've only been mated for a few months, but I've already grown used to having her presence with me all the time. She centers me; she calms me down. And now she's gone."

Finch nodded. "I too have been there. I didn't have a Wolf bond, but I know what it's like to miss someone so much you feel like you are not yourself and you'll never will be alright again."

The two men fell silent, both lost in their own thoughts for several minutes while they contemplated the women who had come to mean so much to them. Finally John spoke. "Did I ever tell you about how I met Joss?"

Finch shook his head. "I know she was the detective on duty when you were brought into the 8th after the fight on the subway and that she spoke with you briefly before my lawyer arrived. I never heard your version of that night."

John got a faraway look on his face. "She knew me, Finch. She watched the fight on some surveillance video and she knew me. She didn't see a monster; she didn't see a dirty bum**. ** She saw ME." John paused and took a deep breath. "She didn't know my story, but she understood it." John paused as he stared off into space. "She asked me if I needed help."

Finch cocked his head to the side. "When was the last time anyone asked you if you need help?"

John gave him a little shrug. "I honestly don't remember. I'm not the kind of guy who gets that question a lot."

Finch nodded his understanding. "Is that when you fell in love with her?"

John looked thoughtful. "Possibly. She was the first person to show me any compassion in years. She gave me hope."

Finch took a sip of his wine and then swirled the liquid around in the glass as he stared at it while he decided if he wanted to ask his next question. "How did you feel about Pam when you were with her?"

John shrugged. "She's beautiful, strong, smart, everything a She Wolf should be, exceptâ€¦," His voice trailed off as he reached for the right words.

"She lacks Joss's compassion?" Finch helpfully supplied.

John nodded. "Pam has no heart."

They both fell silent for a time after that, lost in their thoughts once again. Then Finch broke the quiet. "John, I am curious about something Pam said. She keeps referring to the fact that you and she are descendants of the Old Bloodlines. What exactly does she mean by that?"

John gave a little snort of contempt. "You have probably noticed that Pam and I share several physical characteristics?"

Finch nodded. "Yes, you are both tall, athletic, and you both have the same blue eyes." He took another sip from his wine glass. "Why?"

"Those are all characteristics of the Old Bloodlines; the original Wolf families. The legend is that during the Roman invasion of Britain during the time of Christ, several warriors volunteered to be changed into Wolves by Druid priests to better protect their families and village. Those warriors were the very first Wolves, and their descendants are considered to be more powerful than Wolves who are not from those families." John lifted his lip in a small snarl. "It really doesn't mean anything, but some would consider us nobility."

Finch's eyes opened wide. "Like Dukes and Duchesses? I would consider that a very big thing!"

John snorted and waved his hand in a dismissive gesture. "The idea is similar, but there are no titles and no money. We simply were whelped into the 'right' family." He placed air quotes around the word right.

Finch blinked a couple of times as he processed this new information. "You don't believe yourself to be nobility?"

John shook his head. "I've known a lot of Wolves in my life and those of us from the Old Bloodlines are no better than any other Wolf. Joss, Lionel, Dr. Cho, Lassen**. I would trust all them before I would trust Pam."

"I see your point." Finch licked his lips and then decided to ask a question that had been bothering him. "Why did Pam call Joss a mongrel?"

John's face went hard and his eyes were icy. "It's a slur on Wolves who were turned. It's the worst thing a turned Wolf can be called. Imagine the worst name Joss would've been called before she became Wolf."

Finch gasped and looked apologetic**. "I'm so sorry John!"

John blew out a calming breath. "No, no, it's OK. You didn't know, but Pam DID. Pam is a believer in the Old Ways, so she considers turned Wolves to be less Wolf than those who were born into the pack and definitely less than a Wolf from the Old Bloodlines."

"So she's a bigot," Finch stated.

John nodded.

"John, if the worst happens, do you think you could mate with her? Can you bond with someone you don't love or trust, even to protect the pack?" Finch could not imagine his friend, with his big, caring heart, tied for life to a bigot such as Pam.

John looked down at his hands and shook his head. "I don't know. Alphas have mated with other Wolves they didn't love before, but I

don't know if I could mate with anyone other than Joss." John closed his eyes as he composed himself. "She has to win that challenge."

Finch shifted in his seat. "What if she doesn't and you refuse to mate with Pam?"

John stared into the fire. "Then Pam becomes the Alpha and Joss and I are exiled from Pack life forever."

* * *

><p>A few days later, after Joss was finally cleared for normal activity by Dr. Cho, she was awakened at an ungodly hour by the curtains of her bedroom being thrown open, allowing the sunlight to stream in.<p>

"Rise and shine Jossie!" Shaw chirped in a fake sing-song voice.

Joss slid down under her covers, pulling them up over her head. She had not slept well since Pack night; she missed John too much. Instead of sleeping she had spent the nights staring at the ceiling fan overhead as it went around and around. She was really in no mood for Shaw and her games. "Go away Shaw, I'm armed!"

Shaw was, of course, not deterred. "So am I, but I'm not the one who has a duel to the death in a month," she said as she peeled back the covers on the bed leaving Joss exposed.

"What does that have to do with you breaking into my house and waking me up at the butt crack of dawn?" Joss snapped irritably as she sat up and glared at her friend.

Shaw crossed her arms and glared right back. "Today is the first day of your training. Pam is in it to win it, and she WILL kill you. I'm here to make sure that doesn't happen."

Joss sighed and flopped back on her pillows. "Do you really think you can train me to stand up to her in month? She's had years of training and experience."

"Actually, yes," Shaw said. "Pam is overconfident and has let herself go since she got the boot from the CIA. Did you see the cellulite jiggle on her thighs in that dress she wore to Pack Night? "

Joss laughed while Shaw smirked at her.

Shaw sat down on the bed. "Kidding aside, Pam is out of shape, and you aren't. You already know the basics of hand**-*to**-*hand. I've had the same training she has; I can show you how she is going to come at you and how to counter."

Joss looked thoughtful. "You really think she's out of shape?"

Shaw nodded. "It's common with agents to relax when we leave the service. I avoided it because John and Harold dragged me into their little operation right after I got burned, but Pam didn't have that. She's still deadly, but she is not in prime condition." Shaw hopped up off the bed. "So let's get moving!"

"Can we at least have some coffee first?" Joss asked hopefully.

Shaw grinned at her. "I'm not a barbarian!"

* * *

><p>"What do you know about Krav Maga?" Shaw asked as she faced Joss across a practice mat in the basement gym of one of Finch's safe houses.<p>

Joss dutifully recited what she knew of the martial art. "It's Hebrew for 'Contact Combat.' The Israelis developed it. It's hybrid of several other fighting disciplines like boxing, judo and aikido. It empathizes neutralizing your opponent as quickly and as efficiently as possible. It's a very aggressive fighting style."

Shaw nodded. "It also teaches you to go for the vulnerable parts of the body like the eyes, the throat, and the stomach. In other words, fight to win."

Joss smiled. "I've seen John fight." She tried to not get distracted by the thought of John's graceful but deadly movements as he took down several bad guys at once. Her heart ached at being forcibly separated from him.

"He's one of the best," Shaw grunted. "Pam spent a long time in the CIA, longer than John or me, so we have to assume she's good as well. Challenges like the one she issued to you usually involve knives, so we'll focus on those techniques. I'll show you how to use your knife effectively and how to disarm an opponent."

Shaw picked up a couple of small knives with rubber blades used for practice and tossed one over to Joss. "Let's dance," she said grimly.

* * *

><p>Several hours later...

"Again!" Shaw shouted as she swung for Joss's head for what seemed like the millionth time that day.

Joss, exhausted and dripping with sweat, blocked the blow at the same time she blocked Shaw's other hand as it slashed towards her stomach holding the rubber practice knife. Joss now held both of Shaw's wrists on in her hands; swiftly she brought her knee up and made contact with the smaller operative's stomach. Not too hard, Joss didn't want to hurt her friend too much, but enough so Shaw felt it. Shaw hadn't been pulling very many punches during their sparring match, and Joss felt justified in getting her own licks in.

"OK, good." Shaw stepped back and flopped down on the mat. Joss, grateful for the reprieve, sank down next her. They lay there quietly for a some time, panting like dogs in the summer heat from their long day of training.

"Not bad," Shaw said. "You blocked me just about every time during that last round."

Joss touched her stomach, where a lovely bruise was forming over her solar plexus where the rubber knife had connected far too many times that day. "Not quite every time."

Shaw sat up. "You won't fall for that gambit again."

"No," Joss sighed. It had been a painful lesson, but a valuable one. Had Pam tried that move on Joss before Shaw's training she would have ripped Joss's stomach open. Joss tried not to think about that; the fact the Pam was out to kill her, not just take her place as Alpha, was becoming all too real.

"I need some red meat," Shaw grumbled.

"I need some chocolate," Joss said as she got to her feet.

* * *

><p>After Shaw had left for the night Joss took a hot bath and then crawled into bed. She hoped she was tired enough to sleep, but that was not to be. After a couple of hours of lying there, staring at the ceiling fan overhead as it went around and around, she rolled over on her side and reached out to lay her hand on the spot where John would normally sleep.<p>

She took a deep breath and closed her eyes. She was actually quite used to sleeping without John; neither one of them had a 9 to 5 job and late night stakeouts were a staple of their existence, but the last couple of nights had been different. Since she had mated with John, she had never been completely alone. Through their bond he had always been with her, and she had grown to cherish that connection. She had spent a good deal of her life solo since her uncompromising moral compass tended to demand that she go against the crowd. However, to her amazement, the thing that drove so many people away from her drew John in like a moth to a flame. He treasured her integrity, her principles, and he shared her drive to protect those who could not protect themselves. Losing her bond to him had hit her hard because it meant she was alone once again. After having tasted what it was like to have someone who consistently had her back, going back to being alone was a crushing blow.

Her chest tightened as she thought of her absent mate. She had no words for how much she missed him. He wasn't perfect by any means, but he was a good man and she loved him.

She moved over into his side of the bed and buried her face in his pillow inhaling his scent. It comforted her somewhat to smell the familiar woodsy-mixed-with-gunpowder scent, and she was finally able to fall into a deep and restful sleep.

6. Chapter 6

Once again I have to throw kisses and rose petals at my killer beta, fangirlu. Her comments on this chapter really helped me make it so much better than it originally was. Girl, you rock!

**This chapter consists of several little vignettes as Joss prepares for the challenge and we see how everyone is holding up as the time draws closer. We find out how Taylor feels about the challenge, and

see more of Joss's training, among other things. I felt these were all important to include from a character development perspective. I hope you agree.**

* * *

><p>Chapter 6 - Taylor

With a few keystrokes, Finch had given Joss the entire month off for medical leave, giving her more time to prepare for the upcoming challenge. This also gave her more time to spend with Taylor.

Joss was grateful that Taylor had not been there the night the challenge was issued since he had been traveling with the debate team. Normally he didn't miss a Pack Night since his goal was to become a Wolf himself as soon as he passed his 18th birthday. He knew a challenge had been issued, but like most of the pack, he didn't know just how serious it was, and Joss was not about to tell him.

Despite that, Taylor was still angry with John for allowing the challenge in the first place. He was just getting used to having a father figure in his life, and he reacted with predictable anger when confronted with the possible loss of what he had just gained. Truthfully, John completely understood how the teen felt and was not surprised to find himself uninvited from basketball games and debates. He was not surprised, but it still hurt. He had come to regard Taylor as his own son and losing that relationship was almost as big a blow to him as losing Joss.

After several days of Taylor ignoring John's calls and generally acting like a stereotypical angry teenager, Joss felt it was time for an intervention. Taylor knew what was up as soon as he walked in the door and found his favorite pizza sitting on the table along with a liter of his favorite soda. "Time for a talk?" he sighed.

"Sit down," his mother said firmly, pointing to his normal seat at the table.

Taylor dropped into his chair, slouched, and folded his arms, letting his mother know this was going to be a tough sell.

Joss took a bite of pizza. "I think you should know that you're punishing the wrong person."

Taylor sniffed. "I don't think so. John's the Alpha; he could stop this."

"No, he can't. He has to follow the law." Joss waved a piece of pizza under her son's nose. "Sure you don't want any? It's good!" she said in her best coaxing voice.

Taylor was hungry, so he sighed and took a piece, acting like he was doing his mom a favor by eating. "John doesn't bother following any other laws, so why does he have to bother with this one?"

Joss looked at her son sharply. "How do you know that?"

Taylor glared back. "Really? You think I can't hear you chewing his ass out all the time?"

"Language young man!" Joss snapped, then sighed and rubbed her forehead. "John has to tread very carefully. Pam really got to the pack with her speech. He already broke several protocols by bringing me in the way he did**,** and she exploited that."

Taylor took a bite of his pizza and chewed slowly. "Still, John's the Alpha, can't he can't he stop this?" he mumbled sullenly, not ready to let go of his anger.

"I took the matter out of his hands when I accepted the challenge," Joss said.

Taylor's head snapped up, and he looked his mother straight in the eye. "That was stupid! Why?" he demanded.

Joss decided not to chide him for calling her stupid, because quite frankly, she was beginning to agree with his assessment of the situation. "I thought it was the right thing to do. I need the pack to accept me or they could reject John too. He's waited his whole life to lead a pack, and I won't let him lose his pack because of me."

"This is a bizarro world we got into, Mom," Taylor sighed as he reached for his second slice.

Joss gave her son a weak smile in return. "It's different, that's all."

Taylor chewed his pizza slowly, lost in thought. "I'm not sure I want to do this anymore," he said softly. "You've been a great Alpha, Lassen told me so, and he's Wolf born, so he knows." His eyes met his mom's. "It's not fair they can toss you aside like that."

"I know, baby," Joss sighed. "I'm hurt, make no mistake about that. I don't think they are rejecting me so much as they are trying to cling to their traditions, even if they don't make sense. But I'm Wolf now, and I'm committed. You still have a choice; you don't have to come to Pack Night, and you don't have to be turned. The choice is yours."

Taylor shifted uncomfortably in seat. "I just need some time, mom, to, you know, figure things out."

"Take all the time you need."

* * *

><p>Later that night Joss lay in bed watching that damn ceiling fan go around and around again. She shifted into a more comfortable position as she waited for the ibuprofen to take affect and dull the ache from another one of Shaw's training sessions. As she lay there, she thought back over her conversation with Taylor.<p>

Joss had told Taylor the truth when she said she had been hurt by the pack's willingness to accept the challenge from Pam who was a virtual stranger to them. But as a black woman, she also understood the pull of tradition and how important it was for a marginalized group to hold onto their culture. Joss also had to admit that she was mostly a stranger to the pack since she had been a member for a only few

months longer than Pam. She had thrown herself into her new role with her typical thoroughness and sense of duty, but not enough time had passed for the entire pack to completely accept her**. **

She knew now that she and John had made a mistake in introducing her to the pack in the way they had. She was an outsider and after centuries of persecution and prejudice, Wolves were cautious about accepting outsiders into their ranks. She and John were so in love they had forgotten that their mating was about more than just them. She should have been introduced to the pack before they mated and she should have been member of the pack for at least a few months to gain some trust before she became an Alpha.

It still hurt how quickly they had accepted Pam's challenge though. Joss had worked hard to be a good Alpha_**. **_ She had helped one pack member navigate the confusing justice system when he had been arrested for beating a man who had been harassing his family. He had gotten off with a short probation thanks to Joss's intervention. She arranged for Taylor to tutor the child of one member who needed help in Algebra. The child had gotten a B. She had organized birthday parties and baby showers. She had arranged for food delivery for sick pack members. She had thrown herself into her new role with her typical thoroughness and sense of duty, but not enough time had passed for the entire pack to completely accept her**. **

She was still learning to be Wolf. This world was still strange to her and she had realized now that she should not have expected to just waltz in and take over. This was not the Army and it was not the NYPD, rank was important, but only a part of the equation. She still needed to work on the other part- winning the pack's hearts- and she had been naïve to think otherwise. She should have gone slower and let the pack get to know her before she assumed the Alpha role. John had been too distracted with the numbers to help her through the transition, so she had simply jumped in with both feet, causing some resentment. Now it could cost her John, or cost John his pack.

Joss Carter had never backed down from a fight, and she wasn't about to start now. The stakes were too high for the pack. She suspected most of the pack didn't know just how deadly Pam was. For obvious reasons, they didn't know about John's, Shaw's or Pam's previous lives. She could not believe that Pam would be good, dutiful Alpha. No matter how much the pack had hurt her, she would not give up on them and leave them to Pam. Joss had grown to care for them, they were becoming her friends.

Nope, Joss could not turn her back on them now. She just hoped it wouldn't kill her.

* * *

><p>A couple of evenings after her talk with Taylor, Joss was relaxing on the couch, icing her bruises after another training session with Shaw when she heard a soft tap on the door. She went to answer it and found Finch standing there. "Is something wrong with John?" she asked, her heart clutching. Finch very rarely came to her home, even though he had been invited multiple times.<p>

"He'sâ€¦doing about as well as can be expected, detective," Finch said politely. "May I come in?"

"Of course!" Joss stepped back out of the way to let Finch into the townhouse. "Can I get you some tea?"

"Tea would be lovely, thank you, Detective."

Joss led the way to the kitchen, and Finch seated himself at the counter while she put the kettle on to boil. "You said John was doing about as well as can be expected?" she asked as she rooted around in the cabinet for the Sencha green tea bags John had insisted on keeping on hand for Finch when he came over, even if he very rarely visited the Reese/Carter household.

Finch sighed. "He misses you desperately, but he does his best to hide it. However, he is not sleeping very well, which is why I am here."

"Oh?" Joss took the kettle off the stove and poured a cup of hot water, then dropped the tea bag in. "What can I do about it? I'm barely allowed to see him." Her voice choked a bit on the last sentence, and she closed her eyes for a minute to regain her composure. "Sorry, Harold," she said in a sad tone of voice as she handed him his tea.

"It's OK, detective. I understand not being with the one you love," Finch said kindly, keeping his eyes down as he removed the tea bag and neatly placed it on the saucer to give her some time to recover. "I know this hard on you both, but I think I know of a way to make it a bit easier for Mr. Reese."

Joss leaned back against the counter. "You know I'll do anything for him."

Finch sipped his tea and gave her a small smile. "I think we established that when you took a bullet for him."

Joss unconsciously touched the scar on her chest left by Simmons's bullet.

"But what I have to ask you is not nearly so painful or life threatening," Finch continued. "I merely want to ask you to give me your pillow so I can give it to John."

Joss stared at the software genius for a minute as she processed his odd request. Finch looked a bit uncomfortable**. ** "I understand that this is rather strange request€|"

"I get it," Joss interrupted him with a grin. "I've been sleeping on his side of the bed since he was forced to move in with you. You think sleeping with my pillow covered in my scent will help him sleep better."

Finch was quite relieved she understood. "Yes, I do."

Joss immediately retrieved her pillow from the bedroom and gave it to him with a smile. Somehow it made her feel a little less lonely to know that John was going through the same thing she was. Finch took it gratefully and returned home.

* * *

><p>Finch walked into his townhouse a short while later to find John moodily cleaning his guns on the dining room table. Though the guns continued to bother Finch, he had wisely decided not to say anything to John; the Alpha Wolf needed the distraction.<p>

John looked up as Finch entered the room and immediately noticed the pillow he carried tucked under his arm. John lifted an eyebrow**. "**
"Nap time?" he queried with a hint of a smile.

Finch chuckled. "In a way, Mr. Reese. But not for me; it's for you." He placed the pillow on the table next to the gun parts. With a smug smile he watched as John's eyes opened wide with surprise as his sensitive nose caught a whiff of the scent clinging to the pillow. John looked at Finch and Finch nodded in response. John picked up the pillow and buried his face in it, taking a long deep breath.

Finally John lifted his face from the pillow. Looking up at Finch, he blinked back tears, barely able to choke out, "Thank you."

"I'm not Wolf, so I felt no obligation to your laws." Finch shrugged. "Just another step in my descent into delinquency."

John chuckled for the first time since his separation from Joss.

* * *

><p>That night, Finch woke up in the middle of the night. With a groan he forced himself out of was going to need a pain pill to get back to sleep, and he had left the bottle on the counter in the kitchen. He padded down the hallway as silently as he could in his bare feet, not wanting to wake John.<p>

John was in the habit of leaving his bedroom door open at night so Bear could wander in and out as he pleased. As Finch passed John's bedroom he was unable to resist a peek inside. He saw that John was fast asleep, laying on his side with Joss's pillow hugged tightly to his chest, his body curled around it like it was the woman herself.

Finch continued on his way to the kitchen to get his medication, but his step was bit lighter knowing his idea had worked.

* * *

><p>A few days later Shaw and John were working on the case of Raymond Tuttle, an alarm installation technician who had wired alarm systems for the mansions of some of the richest people in the city. The fact that he had the alarm codes to so many homes of the super-rich had made him an inviting target of a particularly vicious gang who specialized in home invasion robberies. John and Shaw were stationed on the building across the street from Tuttle's apartment, keeping an eye on their number. Sahaw scanned the street using the sight on the Barret sniper rifle while John used his pocket sight to keep an eye on their number through the window of his apartment.<p>

"Oh crap," Shaw snarled.

"Do you see one of gang members?" John asked quietly as he scanned

the street, looking for the threat.

"Worse. Pam is here," Shaw said, her voice dripping with contempt.

John spotted Pam loitering on the street below. Through his scope he could see her smirking up at the rooftop where he and Shaw were stationed. Pam clearly saw both of them looking at her and cheerfully waved.

"Fuck! She's giving us away!" Shaw growled in frustration. "I can drop her from here, easy. Pretty please?"

"No, but only because we're in the 8th Precinct's territory, and Joss and Lionel are on duty, and that could get awkward," John snapped. "I'll get rid of her."

"If she's not gone in five, I'm dropping her anyway," Shaw called after him as John stalked to the door.

"If she's not gone in five, I'll kill her myself," John retorted over his shoulder. "Keep an eye on Tuttle."

John did not bother to hide his raw fury as he approached Pam. He vowed to himself that if Pam had blown their cover, he would snap her neck and throw her body in the river, Wolf laws be damned.

Pam watched him approach a bit nervously, as if she seemed to suddenly realize that interfering in his operation was a really bad idea. Good, John thought as he approached. Maybe she'll learn not to interfere again. He watched as she assumed her usual mask of bravado, and she smirked playfully at him. He did not smile back.

"What are you doing here?" he snarled at her while his glacial blue eyes threatened to cut her to bits.

"I just wanted to see what my future mate did for a living," she purred. "You're so secretive."

He reached and clamped onto her upper arm with a grip of iron and dragged her into the nearest alley. "This isn't a game. Someone's life depends on us."

Pam sighed theatrically and rolled her eyes. "You're so dramatic."

"Remember what we used to do to anyone who screwed up an operation?" he said, his face inches from hers.

"You wouldn't dare! Not before the challenge," Pam hissed back, dropping all pretense of civility.

"Do you really want to find out?" John's quiet voice sliced through Pam's anger like a knife**,** and she stared at him wide-eyed.

Pam jerked her arm out of John's grip. "Fine," she snarled. "But this time next month you and I will be mates and there won't be any secrets." She stormed off down the street. John watched her go, silently hoping that Shaw would make good on her threat to take Pam

out.

"We'll see about that," he snapped as he watched her disappear around the corner.

John stormed back to the roof to resume his vigil with Shaw. As he stomped out onto the roof, Shaw looked at him with concern. "You OK? I'm good here if you need to take some time. Go shoot some people; it will make you feel better, just be sure one of them is Pam."

"I'm fine," John responded churlishly.

Shaw raised an eyebrow and looked at him with an expression on her face that plainly said she didn't believe him. John ignored her and pulled out his pocket scope, resuming surveillance on their number. Shaw made a face and resumed sweeping the street with the big rifle.

"How's Joss's training coming?" John asked casually without pulling his gaze from the number.

Shaw smiled to herself. John wasn't fooling her, when it came to Joss, he never could. "Good. She's fast and she's in shape." Her grin grew a bit wider as she felt her partner relax just the tiniest bit next to her.

"Have you worked on her tracking skills? Part of the challenge is the hunt; she should be able to track Pam using her Wolf sense."

"On it." Shaw grew quiet for a minute while she checked out a likely suspect, then decided he was no threat and moved on. "How is Pam's Wolf Sense? Don't you Old Bloodliners have excellent senses?"

John made a rude noise. "Some of us do, but Pam's is just average. Her range is a only few yards, she's nothing compared to Joss."

Shaw snorted. "In more ways than one."

John finally pulled his eye from the Barret's eyepiece and looked directly at Shaw. "Thank you for helping her."

"She's my friend, John."

* * *

><p>Joss stood at the edge of the park next to Shaw. The radio in Shaw's hand crackled. "OK we're in position."

"Roger. Everyone stay put until we find you," she replied.

"OK, Joss." Shaw turned to her friend. "Focus on your Wolf sense. Can you feel Fusco and the others?"

Joss closed her eyes and focused. "Yes. Lionel, Mike, Lassen. I sense them all."

"Good, now who is closer?"

Joss hesitated for a second. "Lionel feels the strongest."

"Yes," Shaw said, obviously pleased. "Who's next?"

"Mike, then Lassen." Joss didn't hesitate this time.

"OK, now lead me to Fusco."

Joss paused, turning to the left and then to the right. Tentatively, she began leading Shaw down the path to the left. As they moved along her stride became more confident and soon they turned a corner to find Fusco sitting on a bench munching on his beloved falafel.

Shaw glared at him.

"What?" he snapped. "I was hungry."

"So am I," Shaw snarled.

Wordlessly, Fusco indicated a second portion sitting on the bench next to him. Shaw grinned and scooped it up. But her grin vanished as soon as she bit into it. "Hey, there's no meat in these. This isn't real food!"

Joss sighed and rolled her eyes. "I'll go see if I can find Mike and Lassen." As she walked off down the path, she could hear the little voice inside her head nagging at her, _Only a couple of weeks to go_**. **_Are you ready?_

7. Chapter 7

Fusco has been suspicious of Joss's "accident" since it happened. He knows something is wrong he just can't prove it. Now he calls in Finch to help.

* * *

><p>Chapter 7 Fusco's Suspicions

Only a couple of days before Pack Night and the challenge, Fusco sat in the diner booth listlessly picking at his food. Normally he would have eaten The Lyric's pot roast with gusto, but with a few days until the showdown between Joss and Pam, Fusco was feeling the strain. He was scared for his friends; scared of Joss getting maimed or killed and scared for John's mental state if that happened.

He looked up and put his fork down with a sigh when a tired looking Finch slipped into the booth across from him. Finch looked at the detective's barely touched plate. "I haven't been able to eat either," he said quietly.

Fusco gave the software billionaire a nod to acknowledge his comment. "I don't know what I'm gonna do if she gets hurt. Hell, I don't know what _John_ will do."

Finch looked grim. "I don't know either. Mr. Reese has been veryâ€|difficult since the challenge was issued."

Fusco snorted. "He's a pain in the ass at the best of times; I don't

want to think about how he is when the love of his life is about to go all Mortal Kombat with The Angel of Death. I can't imagine living with him."

Finch gave Fusco a wry smile. "I won't lie to you, Detective, Mr. Reese is not the best of roommates right now. I'm glad there has been a steady stream of numbers to keep him occupied, but the casualty rate has been extraordinarily high even for him. Even Ms. Shaw thinks the number of knees that have been shot has been excessive."

"Better them than us," Fusco grumbled as he remembered the days when he was John's favorite "toy."

The waitress came to their table, and Finch ordered tea and a slice of pie. After she left, Finch looked over at this companion. "May I ask why you wanted to meet with me, detective?"

Fusco took a deep breath. "Something has been bugging me since Joss's accident, and I need your help to figure it out."

Finch cocked his head slightly to one side and gave Fusco a curious look. "You know I will do everything in my power to help. What seems to be the problem?"

"Well, you see the problem is I don't know what the problem is, but I just keep thinking something is hinky about what happened to Joss. I keep thinking about that night, going over and over in my head, and then yesterday I realized what's been bugging me." Fusco paused and looked at Finch to be sure he held his attention. "Joss was actually in that puddle for several minutes before she got electrocuted."

Finch's eyes narrowed as he realized the implications of what Fusco had just said. Everyone had assumed that Joss had stepped into the puddle in the heat of the gun battle, not noticing that the cable was there. They had assumed it had just been bad luck. Joss, like many traumatic injury survivors, didn't remember anything about that night, so she had never contradicted this theory. The last thing she remembered from that night was eating dinner with Fusco, several hours before the failed bust. She didn't remember the briefing before the raid, or entering the building, or the gunfight.

Finch began asking a series of rapid-fire questions as his mind raced through all possible scenarios that could account for the discrepancy. "Could Detective Carter have accidentally knocked the cable into the puddle? Kicked it perhaps in the heat of the moment?"

Fusco shook his head. "No. I could partially see her from my spot and she was pretty still, keeping her head down, just trying not to get shot."

Finch frowned. "Could one of the drug cartel members have put the cable in the puddle in an attempt to kill her?"

Fusco shook his head again. "They were all in front of us. Besides, they were all heavily armed**;** they would have just shot her."

"Where any of her enemies on the force there that night?"

"No. The last few dregs of HR stay as far away from her as they can. She's like their bogeyman. I looked up the service records of the Narcos who were there. All clean. None of them were HR. Laskey did some sniffing around as well, and he got the same results."

Finch removed his glasses and rubbed the bridge of his nose while he thought. "So someone else was there that night. Someone who wished Detective Carter ill. Someone who wanted her dead and tried to make it look like an accident."

Fusco looked grim. "Yeah, just what I was thinking."

They looked at each other and said the same thing at the same time. "Pam Barrett."

Finch put his glasses back on, looking very disturbed. "Isn't killing your Alpha a serious crime in your world?"

"Yeah, it's one of the worst. Killing a pack mate is bad, but killing your Alpha? John would be justified in killing Pam outright if we can prove it." Fusco made a sour face. "Problem's proving it."

Finch raised an eyebrow. "I take it you have tried?"

"I did some snooping," Fusco growled, "but came up goose eggs. Laskey and I showed Pam's picture around to the cops who were there and none of them saw her. I checked the security camera footage from the warehouse, but it was too dark to see anything besides muzzle flashes."

Finch looked thoughtful. "Given Ms. Barrett's background, I'm not surprised that no one saw her enter the warehouse or move the cable. Mr. Reese or Ms. Shaw could have easily done the same thing."

Fusco sighed and ran his hand over his face. "I'm pretty sure you're right**. I thought the same thing, but we need proof and fast."

Finch leaned forward. "I need the security camera footage; I may be able to enhance it."

Fusco reached into his coat pocket and handed over a DVD. In response to Finch's questioning look he shrugged. "One of the tech guys owed me a favor. All the camera footage from an hour before the raid to an hour after it was all over is on that DVD."

Finch took the DVD and stood up. "I'll be in touch, detective." And then he hurried out the door.

Fusco flopped back in his seat. "Make us proud, Glasses," he said softly. "Make us proud."

The waitress appeared next to him and looked at his barely touched plate. "Everything alright, Fusco?" she asked. "Never saw you leave pot roast behind before."

"It's fine, Verna, I'm just not hungry," Fusco sighed. "It's been a rough month."

Verna picked up his plate. "I'll put this in a to-go box for you. You'll be hungry later."

Fusco watched her walk off. He rather doubted he would be able to eat much until the challenge was over, but he would humor his favorite waitress. With a grunt he pulled himself out of the booth and went to the register to pay.

* * *

><p>Finch sat at his desk in the library staring at the large screen in front of him. With a sigh he checked his watch and then took his glasses off. Tiredly he rubbed the bridge of his nose and then leaned back in his chair as he battled the creeping feeling of defeat. He knew Pam had tried to kill Joss; he felt it. However, unless he could find the proof in this footage, the challenge would go forward and Joss could lose her life.

But the footage was not giving up its secrets easily. He had gone through the footage, tried a new setting, and then gone through the footage again. He had repeated this process several times and his eyes were tired, his neck ached and his leg was screaming at him. Bear whined and laid his head on Finch's lap, sensing his master's pain, both physical and emotional. Finch stroked the dog's head for a few minutes then got up and took a pain killer. He walked about his desk a few times stretching his aching muscles with Bear following him closely.

He checked his watch and sighed deeply as he realized the challenge was only an hour away. With grim determination he hobbled back to his office chair. He replaced his glasses and with a few clicks of the mouse, he changed a couple of settings on the video enhancement software. With another click, he began to go through the footage frame by torturous frame. Suddenly he saw it: a brief fleeting image of Pam Barrett as she was slipping into the warehouse just as the bullets started to fly. It was only a couple of frames, but it was her. She had been there.

Finch picked up his phone and scrolled back through the list of text messages until he reached the one from the Machine he had received that night**;** the one with Joss's number. He had assumed that the Machine had been trying to warn him that Joss was in danger from the raid gone bad, but as he compared the time stamp on the text to the time Pam entered the warehouse, he realized that they were identical. The Machine had known.

Finch looked up at the web camera mounted above his monitors. "Show me," he asked. His heart hammered in his chest as he watched as the images flashed by on the screen too fast for him to see.

* * *

><p>Pam sat alone in her comfortable apartment, eyes closed, meditating on the coming evening. Everything she had ever wanted was about to be hers. John, a pack to lead, and the happy life that had been taken from her all those years ago were all within her grasp, all she had to do was take it.<p>

Her father's voice echoed in her head. "You're the best princess. You can do anything you put your mind to. Now go and take what you

want."

Pam opened her eyes and stood up. "I will daddy. I will."

* * *

><p>Joss had been prowling her apartment like a caged animal all day. Taylor had been sent to her mother's for the night so she had nothing to distract her from the coming challenge. She tried to watch TV and she tried to read, but she found she couldn't sit still long enough to focus. Shaw had managed to coax her into eating a light lunch, but was unsuccessful in getting her to sit down and relax.<p>

Finally Shaw stood up from the couch where she had sprawled to stay out of Joss's way. "It's time to go," she said. Joss stopped her pacing and nodded. She was ready.

They left the apartment and climbed into Shaw's car. The drive to the park was quiet as Joss practiced the calming techniques that John had taught her a long time ago.

Shaw parked close to the park entrance and they climbed out of the car. "You're ready, Joss," Shaw offered quiet encouragement as they approached the clearing where they would meet the rest of the pack.

They stepped into the clearing, and Joss looked at John standing to one side. Their eyes locked and Joss felt the familiar thrill that jolted her every time she saw him. He was the other half of her soul. He was worth fighting for, and she was going fight with every fiber of her being. She felt the determination surge within her.

Joss gave Shaw a small smile. "I know I am, Sam," Joss replied.

8. Chapter 8

And now the chapter you have been waiting for, the challenge! There will be one more chapter after this one

* * *

><p>Chapter 8: The Challenge

As Finch continued to scan the video of the raid looking for proof of Pam's crime, the pack finally gathered under the full moon for the challenge. The mood was exceptionally somber. It seemed the pack had realized the magnitude of what was happening that night and they were not entirely comfortable with it, despite their previous enthusiasm.

As Fusco stood with his pack mates, he eyed the rest of the pack with feelings that bordered on contempt. His partner was a good person and a good Alpha**;** he was going to have hard time forgiving this bunch of ingrates for the position she now found herself in. If she was hurtâ€|

Fusco shook his head and looked over at John. The Alpha looked grim as he surveyed his pack. He had a feeling his turmoil was nothing compared to John's, but as usual John betrayed little emotion.

Fusco next looked over at Joss. She was standing straight and proud, her chin up, betraying no trace of any fear. She radiated confidence and serenity. She looked the part of an Alpha female in every way. Fusco smiled fondly at her, and she smiled back.

Pam on the other hand was glaring at Joss as if she was trying to kill her with her eyes alone. Fusco felt the hostility rolling off of her and a quick glance around the circle of the pack showed they could feel it too. It was making them visibly uncomfortable. Good; they were getting a taste of Pam's true nature. The contrast between the two candidates was striking and Fusco could feel the pack's opinion consolidating behind Joss.

John waited until his entire pack was gathered around him, then he finally spoke. By that point, Fusco could feel just how unhappy the pack was, but John did nothing to dispel the bleak mood.

"Are the candidates ready?" he asked in a hard voice, looking to Joss and then Pam as they stood on opposite sides of the pack.

Joss lifted her chin slightly in a gesture of defiance. "Yes, Alpha," she replied in a clear voice.

Pam could barely peel her eyes away from Joss to look at John. "Yes, let's get it over with," she snapped impatiently.

"The challenge will be in the form of the Hunt," John said as his cold eyes swept over the pack. "Each candidate will start out on different ends of the park. They will stalk each other and engage in physical combat. The challenge is over when the Pack and I determine one of them can no longer fight or hunt. _Our decision will be final_."

The pack shifted uncomfortably at the mention of physical combat. It was a traditional part of the Old Ways, but it was rarely used in modern times. Fusco guessed that most of the pack had never been privy to a challenge that included physical combat before.

"Each candidate will be armed with identical knives." John nodded to Sam who handed each woman a small knife with a four inch blade in a thigh holster. "This will be the only weapon allowed. This is a test of hunting skill and physical strength, not weaponry."

Fusco hid his smile. John had selected a challenge that played to Joss's strengths. Strengths that Pam didn't know Joss had.

John waited while each of the She Wolves strapped their knives to their legs and were patted down by Fusco to determine that they had no other weapons on them. Fusco whispered "Good luck" to Joss as he checked her and then turned to Pam.

"Ready to cop a feel?" Pam smirked at him as he approached.

"I'm only touching you under orders from my Alpha," Fusco shot back. He checked Pam over nothing he stepped back and nodded to John.

"Lassen, escort Pam to the north end of the park. Sam, take Joss to the south end. When you see the flare, the challenge begins." He

looked around at the rest of the pack. "Everyone spread out. Call to rest of the pack if you see the candidates engage with each other so the rest of the pack can observe."

The rest of the pack vanished to carry out their Alpha's order, leaving Fusco alone with John. Just as Fusco started to go, he stopped and turned to John, who was standing alone in a small pool of light from the overhead light. "She'll be alright**, **John," Fusco said softly.

"Go, Lionel," John said in a tired voice.

Fusco did what he was told, leaving John alone in the small clearing. John checked his watch then paced restlessly for a few minutes while he waited for enough time to pass for the candidates to get into position. After checking his watch again, he raised his arm and fired the flare gun. The challenge was on. Then he too vanished into the foliage.

* * *

><p>Joss and Sam looked up as they saw the flare streak into the sky and light up the park.<p>

"You got this**,** Joss," Sam said confidently. "I'll be close by at all times." Then she vanished into the woods.

Joss squared her shoulders and silently slipped into the bushes. She moved to a spot where she was sure she could not be seen and reached out with her Wolf sense. She quickly located Sam about 30 yards to her right. A couple of other pack members she couldn't immediately identify were also close by.

Methodically, she reached out and found various members of her pack until she found the one she was looking for. It did not take her long to locate her rival's distinctive hateful feel. Joss judged that Pam was still on the other side of the park using a zigzag search pattern. Joss started moving in Pam's direction, careful to not to make a sound and avoiding the foot paths.

Joss moved slowly and deliberately. The closer she got to the Pam**,** the better she could feel and predict her opponent's movements. She was very close now. Pam was coming straight for her.

Joss climbed a majestic old oak whose branches overhung the main path through the park and quietly waited for Pam to come to her. Her muscles tensed as she felt her foe approach. She was coiled to strike as Pam emerged from a thick stand of brush almost right under the tree, apparently completely unaware that her rival was hovering above her.

Joss lunged from above and behind as Pam passed under the tree. Pam turned and tried to raise her knife, but she was too late. Before she could turn around, Joss landed on her with her full weight. Pam went down hard and Joss easily disarmed her, throwing the knife away into the dark night.

Pam managed to throw Joss off. They both rolled to their feet and faced each other slowly**,** circling on the foot path under the

branches of the oak tree. Although Pam no longer had her knife, Joss was under no illusion as to how deadly her opponent was.

Joss was vaguely aware that there was a wolf howling nearby, calling the rest of the pack to this location. Pam closed on her and the two combatants exchanged several punches before they broke apart. Joss could feel her cheek starting to swell, and Pam's lip was split and swelling. Joss could also see that Pam was trying to protect her ribs, probably from when she'd first jumped her.

Pam executed a perfect spin-kick, catching Joss on her upper arm just below her shoulder. She went down but used her momentum to roll back onto her feet before Pam could pin her to the ground. _There's a bruise_, Joss thought ruefully as she regained her feet. _At least it's not broken_.

Pam tried another kick**,** but Joss dodged it. They went to back to circling each other for another few seconds.

Pam lunged for Joss again this time going for her legs and tackling her to the ground. They rolled over and over, striking at each other wildly, trying to gain an advantage. Too late**,** Joss realized that Pam was going for her knife still strapped into its holster on her thigh. Joss frantically flailed at her holster trying to prevent Pam from getting the blade. The break in Joss's concentration was the opening that Pam needed and before she knew it, Pam was on top with Joss pinned to the ground on her back. Pam had Joss's knife in her hand, raising it overhead to strike a fatal blow.

Shaw's training paid off as Joss grabbed Pam's wrist with one hand and smashed her nose with the other. Joss brought a knee up to throw her off, twisting Pam's wrist and forcing her to drop the blade. Between the broken nose and the now sprained wrist, Joss was able to get her knee in position and shove Pam off her. Joss snatched up the knife and leaped on top of Pam, pinning the bloody Wolf to the ground and holding the knife to her throat.

For one second Joss seriously considered slicing Pam's neck open and letting her bleed out. She had no doubt that Pam would have done the same to her without hesitation. Just a little more pressureâ€¦|.

"That's enough!" John's voice sliced through the air and brought Joss back to reality. She blinked and looked up to see the entire pack standing around her. She dropped the knife and carefully rose to her feet suddenly noticing how tired and achy she was. Her hair and clothes were covered in leaves and dirt**,** and her t-shirt was torn and ragged. She looked at her arms and saw they were covered in scratches from wrestling on the forest floor. John stepped forward and carefully placed his suit coat around her shoulders as she shivered.

"Stop the challenge!" John turned to see Finch hurrying as fast as he could move down the path.

"The challenge is over, Finch. Joss won," John said holding Joss tightly against his body as Finch joined the group.

"Congratulations, Detective," Finch panted. "But I beg to differ**,

**Mr. Reese, it's not quite over."

"You found it?" Fusco grinned.

Finch gave the pudgy detective a sly smile and then took his phone out of his pocket. With a theatrical flourish, he touched a button, and every phone in the Pack buzzed. Almost in unison, the Pack checked their phones, confused.

"The picture you are about to view is of Pam Barrett the night Jocelyn Carter was electrocuted. The picture shows Ms. Barrett placing the cable into the puddle where Detective Carter was crouched. _Pam Barrett tried to kill your Alpha!_"_

A gasp of horror rippled through the Pack as they examined the picture and saw the truth. John, however, was deadly calm, his face a mask of stone. He stepped forward**. ** "Pam." His voice sent a shiver down the spine of every person there; it was quiet, calm and dripped with menace.

Pam took a step back. "John, the picture is obviously Photoshoppedâ€|"

"Are you accusing Finch of lying?" John asked her in the same deadly calm voice.

"Well, he is a friend of Jocelyn's," Pam snarled defiantly, but she took another step back.

"He is also a friend of mine and a friend of the pack**. **" John continued his deliberate advance.

Pam tried to back away some more, but she was backed up against a tree.

The pack watched with morbid fascination. Most of them knew what was about to happen, but they could not tear their eyes away from the deadly tableau in front of them. No one said a word on Pam's behalf. There was nothing to say.

John stopped right in front of Pam, his hands balled into fists, his posture tense. Every Wolf could sense the raw fury rolling off him waves, but John remained still as he stared at the renegade She**-**Wolf.

Joss, holding John's suit jacket tightly around her**, ** moved a couple of steps. "John," she said softly and calmly.

At the sound of his mate's voice, John visibly relaxed and he stepped back, leaving a few feet between himself and the cowering Pam. "Detective Fusco, arrest Pam Barrett for the attempted murder of Detective Carter."

John looked around at the assembled pack. "Joss Carter is my mate and your Alpha female," he growled. "If any of you still have a problem with that I suggest you find another pack." Then he turned on his heel and walked back to Joss. He slipped his arm around her waist and watched as the rest of the pack left, leaving John, Joss, Shaw, Lionel and Harold alone with Pam.

John nodded to Lionel and then he and Joss started walking away. Lionel advanced towards Pam, taking his handcuffs out of his pocket as he did so. Pam didn't even seem to notice his approach; her eyes were fixed on John and Joss's backs as they walked away. Just as Lionel reached her, Pam sprang into action. She smashed him across the face at the same time she used her leg to swipe his legs out from under him. He went down hard with a groan as he hit the ground and the air was knocked from his lungs.

With unholy speed, Pam grabbed the knife off the ground where Joss had dropped it and lunged for the unprotected back of the woman she considered her enemy. She was no match for John's reflexes however, as he spun and caught her in mid-air. A short struggle ensued that ended with John holding Pam around the neck from behind. She thrashed about in a desperate attempt to dislodge him, but he had her firmly in his grasp. "No more," he whispered into her ear.

Then with one swift and brutal jerk of his arm, he snapped her neck.

John dropped Pam's lifeless body on the ground and turned to Fusco as he scrambled to his feet with some help from Shaw. "Are you alright?" he asked.

Fusco nodded rubbing his cheek where Pam had hit him. "Yeah, I'll be fine." He looked at the body lying on the ground at John's feet and sighed. "Oyster Bay, here I come."

"Get Joss out of here," Shaw said to John. "I'll help Detective Dork lose the corpse."

"I'm standing right here!" Fusco snapped.

John gave them both a small smile**. ** "Thank you." Then he turned to Joss**. ** Let's go home."

Joss had been standing over Pam's body, looking down at the former operative sadly. She had truly hoped it would not come to this, but somehow she had known all along that this outcome was inevitable. One of them had to die. Still, despite everything Pam had put her through, Joss couldn't help being sad over the waste of a life.

Joss looked up at John and gave him a small smile. She was ready to leave, and she was ready to be with her mate. She was ready to reclaim her place in the pack and in John's life.

* * *

><p>Whelp, Pam got what was coming to her. Hope everyone is happy with the outcome! Next chapter, SMUT!

End
file.